

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MONTREAL
ALL OTHER CANADIAN CONSULATES (BY POUCH)

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0244

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJ: WHOSE REFERENDUM FIRST?

REF: QUEBEC 220

SUMMARY: QUEBEC LIBERAL DEPUTY AND FORMER CHAIRMAN OF CANADIAN ECO-
NOMIC COUNCIL, ANDRE RAYNAUD, BELIEVES REFERENDUM WILL BE
CALLED IN 1979 IF PQ TIMING NOT UPSET BY EARLY FEDERAL ELECTION.
LATTER, HE DESCRIBED AS "QUITE POSSIBLE." RAYNAUD, ECHOING OTHER SIMI-

LAR PREDICTIONS,SUGGESTED TRUDEAU MAY BE PLANNING AN ALL-CANADA CONSTI-

TUTIONAL REFERENDUM TO BE HELD AFTER EARLY FEDERAL ELECTION AND BASED
ON PROPOSALS FOR NEW CONFEDERAL ARRANGEMENTS. RAYNAUD BELIEVES
SUCH A STRATEGY COULD UNDERCUT THE PQ OR, AT LEAST, FORCE THEM TO
ADVANCE THE TIMING OF THEIR OWN REFERENDUM. TO ASSURE THE SUCCESS OF
THIS STRATEGY, RAYNAUD AGREED THAT PROPOSALS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

MUST BE FAR RANGING AND NOT RPT NOT READJUSTMENT OF DETAILS. HE HOPES

TRUDEAU IS PREPARED FOR PROFOUND CHANGES NECESSARY BUT IS NOT SURE PM
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HAS YET SUFFICIENTLY MODIFIED HIS COMMITMENT TO STRONGLY CENTRALIZED,
INTEGRATED STATE IN CANADA. RAYNAUD, AS ECONOMIST, DOUBTS PRESENT
ECONOMIC RECESSION AND PQ "MISMANAGEMENT" WILL HAVE MUCH
INFLUENCE ON REFERENDUM OR NEXT PROVINCIAL ELECTION FOR HE PREDICTS
SIGNIFICANT REVIVAL BY MID-1978 ON COAT-TAILS OF STRONG US ECONOMIC
RECOVERY. END SUMMARY.

1. PROMINENT LIBERAL DEPUTY IN QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND FORMER CHAIRMAN OF CANADIAN ECONOMIC COUNCIL, ANDRE RAYNAUD, YESTERDAY TOLD ME HE THINKS PQ STRATEGY IS NOW BASED ON HOLDING REFERENDUM IN 1979. BUT, HE BELIEVES THIS TIMETABLE COULD BE UPSET SHOULD TRUDEAU CALL A GENERAL ELECTION THIS FALL, AN EVENTUALITY RAYNAUD CONSIDERS "QUITE POSSIBLE".

2. PREVIOUSLY, WHEN TRUDEAU'S ELECTORAL PROSPECTS LOOKED GRIM, RAYNAUD IS CONVINCED LEVESQUE MADE PLANS TO DELAY REFERENDUM UNTIL AFTER A FEDERAL GENERAL ELECTION IN THE EXPECTATION THAT TRUDEAU WOULD LOSE. THE RECENT WAXING OF TRUDEAU'S POPULARITY HAS UPSET THIS RECKONING.

3. AS FOR TRUDEAU'S STRATEGY, RAYNAUD ECHOED OTHER RECENT PREDICTIONS THAT THE PM MAY BE CONSIDERING HIS OWN ALL-CANADA REFERENDUM WHICH WOULD BE BASED ON REVISION OF EXISTING CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS. SUCH AN INITIATIVE, RAYNAUD OPINED, COULD EITHER PREEMPT THE PQ'S REFERENDUM OR FORCE LEVESQUE TO ADVANCE THE TIMING OF HIS OWN REFERENDUM. THE LATTER WOULD, AT LEAST, DISRUPT THE PQ'S CAREFUL PREPARATIONS FOR REFERENDUM, AND COULD MEAN THAT THE REFERENDUM WOULD BE HELD IN A PERIOD LESS LIKELY TO ADVANTAGE THE

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PQ.

4. TO BE SUCCESSFUL, RAYNAUD AGREED THAT FEDERAL REFERENDUM MUST PRESENT THE QUEBECOIS WITH A BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND NOT JUST SUPERFICIAL ADJUSTMENTS. HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT TRUDEAU IS PREPARED TO MAKE SUCH CONCESSIONS, BUT WAS UNCERTAIN OF PM'S INTENTIONS. RAYNAUD CONSIDERS IT ESSENTIAL TO DESTROY THE "MYTH" THAT PREVIOUS CONSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENTS WERE IMPOSED ON THE QUEBECOIS. THIS

CAN NOW BEST BE DONE BY POPULAR REFERENDUM IN WHICH MAJORITY OF QUEBECOIS VOTE TO ACCEPT NEW CONSTITUTION.

5. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON POSSIBLE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE PQ OF DEPRESSED ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN QUEBEC, RAYNAUD, "SPEAKING AS AN ECONOMIST", SAID HE BELIEVES QUEBEC'S ECONOMY WILL BE ON THE UPSWING BY FALL 1978, PULLED ALONG BY THE SUSTAINED RECOVERY OF THE US ECONOMY. THUS, HE REASONS THAT CURRENT BAD ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND "PQ MISMANAGEMENT" OF THE ECONOMY ARE NOT RPT NOT LIKELY TO BE FACTORS IN REFERENDUM OR IN NEXT PROVINCIAL ELECTION.

6. COMMENT: QUEBEC FEDERALISTS ARE CLEARLY HOPEFUL TRUDEAU

WILL EXPLOIT HIS REVIVED POPULARITY TO OUTMANEUVER AND DEFEAT SEPARATISTS. THEIR MOST TROUBLING CONCERN IS WHETHER THE PM HIMSELF IS WILLING -- AS ONE PUT IT -- TO "GIVE UP HIS DREAM OF A CENTRALIZED FEDERAL SYSTEM". IF HE IS NOT, DEFT MANEUVERS CAN DO NO RPT NO MORE THAN DELAY SEPARATIST CHALLENGE. VIRTUALLY ALL FRANCOPHONES, AND MANY ANGLOPHONES, I HAVE TALKED TO HERE AGREE THAT ESSENTIAL PART OF ANY ACCEPTABLE OFFER IS SPECIAL STATUS FOR QUEBEC WITHIN A MORE

DECENTRALIZED CONFEDERATION.

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